

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR COBIA

The Department is considering listing cobia as in need of conservation. Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) are caught in both state and federal waters along the Atlantic Coast and in the Chesapeake Bay. In 2015, both the recreational and the total annual catch limits of Atlantic migratory group cobia were exceeded. As a result, changes in management are needed in order to protect against the potential negative impacts resulting from an unregulated fishery. More recently, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved the initiation of a new Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Atlantic Migratory Group of Cobia to complement fishery management efforts of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council). This action responds to a request by the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council for the Commission to consider joint or complementary management of the resource in light of the significant overage of the 2015 recreational annual catch limit (ACL), the impact of those overages to state management, and the observation that approximately 82% of reported recreational landings are harvested in state waters. The addition of cobia to the in need of conservation list provides the Secretary of Natural Resources authority to adopt rules and regulations relating to the taking, possession, transportation, sale or offer for sale, size limits, and other regulations necessary to conserve the fish when federal recommendations are made.

Scoped at the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission and Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission meetings in October 2016